

BALLET TODAY

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WALTER E. OWEN
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A MAGAZINE DEVOTED TO BALLET EVERYWHERE

1/-

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with a foreword by MARY CLARKE

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

Sadler's Wells Theatre Re-opens

THE newly decorated Sadler's Wells Theatre re-opened for the opera and ballet season on Monday, September 18th, and on the following evening the whole of ballet-going London (not to mention New York City Ballet who flew back to America the next day) fought its way into the first performance of Ballet. Ungrateful hounds that we are, we took the look at the transformed theatre with its chandeliers, cream paint and red curtains and murmured "Cafeteria". No one ever thought of Sadler's Wells with its all-pervading putty colour as a beautiful or even a cosy theatre and it had certainly grown painfully shabby during its honourable war service, but most of us liked it better in its honest poverty than in its new and jaunty phase, a foretaste of which we had already had in the last season's metamorphosis of the coffee bar. But did the current theatrical craze for pale blue have to extend to our old friends Bottom, Titania and the rest, so that they now lie above the proscenium for all the world like a Wedgwood plaque?

"Trumpet Concerto"

Anticipation ran high as to how the Theatre Ballet would fare in a work by Balanchine. Alas, there is no sign anywhere that Balanchine ever gave these particular dancers a thought; the ballet would look exactly the same performed by any troupe of dancers anywhere. Its real place is at the Empire Cinema where, reinforced with a couple of dozen precision dancers, it would be enormously effective. The whole work is simply a few links wrenched off the endless invention of Balanchine *enchaînements*. It is all beautifully fitted together, running smoothly from the rise of the curtain on drummer girls already in high-stepping action to the time when it falls on the whole company, now augmented by three boys, in a Balan-

chine group which we seem to have seen before. I doubt if I have ever seen so many *retirés* in one ballet, and I know I have never seen such badly fitting tunics as those worn by the boys. Svetlana Beriosova, making her London debut with the company, was sadly miscast, for the crisp, small movements had nothing in common with her long, flowing extensions, while her habit of puckering her eyebrows and looking wan was quite out of character. Patricia Miller, unbecomingly hair-styled, was more in keeping though less technically assured when she danced it later.

The first night reception was cool until the appearance of the solo trumpeter and of Balanchine himself for whom we all have the deepest admiration and affection even when we do not wholeheartedly admire all his work.

A Nut-Cracking Bore

Whenever I have to sit through *Casse-Noisette* I always spend the time thinking what a pity it is that the *Grand Pas de Deux* should be so good, for otherwise we should have long ceased to be inflicted with this excruciating *divertissement*. Since Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet make a habit of including classical excerpts in their programmes, they might consider jettisoning everything else and simply retain the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier.

Are they really such babies?

And since I am obviously in a carping mood—I grow more and more worried over the general attitude at this theatre that these dancers are just a bunch of extremely talented children who have to be treated by the audience with an indulgence which resembles that of besotted parents at a pupil display. The dancers can hardly be blamed if they react to the prevailing atmosphere, and though some of them are noticeably more mature than they were a few months ago their attitude to their work still seems to be thoroughly adolescent and irresponsible. Before the war, dancers like Fonteyn, May, Brae, Somes, Field, Hart, were dancing at Sadler's Wells Theatre. They were no older, and some of them were younger, than the dancers who form the present Theatre Ballet. No one went about drooling, "Aren't they simply wonderful considering they are only children?" Their performances had to, and did, stand comparison with the two great Russian companies. Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet is full of talent, but for goodness sake, let it develop naturally into maturity. Only a small proportion of these dancers can be absorbed into the parent company at Covent Garden; for the majority the future lies in the theatre where they now appear. The time for these boys and girls to start growing up is now, not at some problematical future time when

(Continued on page 13)

AGAIN, A TRIUMPH

THE SADLER'S WELLS' SECOND AMERICAN SEASON GETS UNDER WAY WITH AN OPENING WEEK OF EVENING-LENGTH CLASSICAL BALLETS IN NEW YORK CITY

By ARTHUR TODD

ONCE more the magnificent Sadler's Wells Ballet has conquered New York and their success, so far, has equalled last season's first week, if such a feat is humanly possible. *Le Lac des Cygnes* and *The Sleeping Beauty* were the two works in the first week's repertoire and both were presented with the characteristic polish and artistry that we have come to expect of the company.

Fortunately, as Madame de Valois has expressed it, "New York audiences are being treated like London this season with alternate casts", and, it must be added, we have accepted this artistic treat with great relish. Judging by current public acceptance of this policy, the company might easily have a six-month season in New York with capacity houses for the entire engagement. Though Londoners have doubtless become accustomed to alternate casts, this principle has added immeasurably to audience discrimination and enthusiasm over here. As a matter of fact, it is somewhat overwhelming since, in most instances, we consider ourselves fortunate when our domestic companies assemble one first-rate cast and then we wear out these dancers in a repetition of set roles and rarely, if ever, give other company members an opportunity to learn or perform these parts.

The gala opening night performance on Sunday

night, September 10th, was, for many others and myself, an even more memorable occasion than last year's first night American debut. Last year we did not know the company nor were we accustomed to full-length ballets. However, this year we *did* know the company and what to expect of it, and we were not disappointed though we had set our sights very high. The entire company seemed more at home on the stage of the Met., and though during the opening sequences of *Le Lac des Cygnes* there were some slight evidences of nervousness and tension, these quickly passed and even the steaming, humid atmosphere of the unseasonable summer-like evening was soon forgotten.

The evening was doubly thrilling because we were welcoming back treasured and respected friends and the whole atmosphere inside the Met. was quite incandescent. Though I've witnessed practically every major premier in New York since 1936, I've never been so moved as I was at this year's gala premier. All evening long the enthusiasm mounted and by the time Margot Fonteyn began the thirty-two *fouettés*, the audience started applauding and, at their conclusion, a shout rose from all over the house. This was not a case of isolated cheers and bravos but a full-throated roar that almost approached mob hysteria. At the



LEFT TO RIGHT—MICHAEL SOMES, MOIRA SHEARER, S. HUKOK, DAVID WEBSTER, MARGOT FONTEYN, NINETTE DE VALOIS, ROBERT IRVING AND FREDERICK ASHTON IN THE PRESS ROOM AT LA GUARDIA AIRPORT. MISS DE VALOIS KNOWS BY NOW THAT SHE NEED NOT HAVE LOOKED SO WORRIED OVER THE PROSPECTS OF THIS RETURN VISIT

Photograph by
Walter E. Owen

of the evening, the audience was only slightly less enthusiastic.

Margot Fonteyn's double role was beautifully danced and conceived. Her warmth, lyricism and dancing as the Queen of the Swans offered a perfect contrast to her sharp and glittering movements as Odette. In this latter role, Fonteyn's approach to the character makes them seem a logical extension of the first, though some may wish that she smiled a trifle less throughout this act. Michael Somes makes a virile and commanding Prince and he is more than adequate, slightly less than sensational, in the *pas de deux*, and appears, at this writing, to be the finest all-round male dancer in the company. All of the characters and supporting parts were meticulously performed with special honours going to Leslie Edwards as Benno, John Powell as Wolfgang, and the delightful Nadia Nerina, who stood out particularly in the *pas de trois* with Violetta Elvin and Alexis Rassiné. Robert King's conducting of the orchestra was not always up to last year's high standards and there were some moments in which the score sounded brassy and overly busy. This first night's bill was repeated on Tuesday, the 12th, with the whole cast seeming considerably more at ease and with a more normally appreciative capacity house in attendance.

During this first week, New York audiences had the opportunity to judge and compare Margot Fonteyn's and Beryl Grey's interpretations in *Le Lac des Cygnes* as well as Fonteyn's, Grey's and Moira Shearer's late-in-the-week debut in *The Sleeping Beauty*. Since each of these artists appears so validly right in her own interpretation, it is critically impossible, if not undesirable, to single out one just as it would be to choose one Hamlet as the perfect ideal after witnessing John Gielgud, Leslie Howard or Maurice Evans play it in the theatre. Like these great actors, Fonteyn, Grey and Shearer each bring their individual art to their roles and the most laudable feature is that each fits her role so well in her own way that no one of the performances seems at all like a copy of the others. Fonteyn, for instance, makes everything appear effortless, with her emotional, dramatic and technical gifts fused into a cohesive whole. Moira Shearer has made remarkable progress since last season and her technical and emotional range seem on an equal basis. Where Shearer was chiefly brilliant last season, she now seems to have added depth and range. Her great beauty, of course, is another decided asset. Beryl Grey, though she has not yet equalled her *Le Lac des Cygnes* matinee of last year, is a dancer of enormous skill and remarkable ability and her innate musical and dramatic sense, added to her technical prowess, solidly establish her as one of Britain's greatest ballerinas. Violetta Elvin, though she has, as yet, had far too little to do this season, may also be considered in this category and the

fact that we are not able to see her Odette-Odile in New York is one of the major disappointments of the season.

On Wednesday evening, September 13th, Beryl Grey had the challenging opportunity of making her first appearance in the dual role in *Le Lac des Cygnes* with the very able support of John Field as her partner. Like America's modern dancers, Beryl Grey uses her whole body as an instrument (perhaps this may account for the reason that she is continually singled out by American contemporary dancers who have seen her as the best dancer in the company) and, as a result, all her work carries great emotional conviction though there is a slight tendency towards exaggeration of mimetic gesture and stylisation that one can hope will disappear again as soon as she has a few more performances in *Le Lac des Cygnes* and *The Sleeping Beauty*. One can also assume that she will again tower above the technical aspects of the Black Swan variations and the Rose *adagio*. Otherwise, her magnificently sustained *arabesques*, elegantly smooth leg extensions and her superb *allegro* were particularly commendable.

As Miss Grey's partner, John Field provided excellent support throughout *Le Lac des Cygnes* (he is, indeed, an ideal partner for her in every way) and his *entrechats huit* in the third act were most proficiently performed. His pantomime is direct and authoritative though, perhaps, a shade over-done for some American tastes. Violetta Elvin, Nadia Nerina, Jill Gregory and Anne Negus were noteworthy Cygnets while Brian Shaw, Margaret Dale and Pauline Clayden were commendable in the first act *pas de trois*.

From Thursday through Sunday of the first week, *The Sleeping Beauty* was presented with Fonteyn, Shearer and Grey alternating as the Princess Aurora. The well-nigh perfect Tchaikovsky score and Messel's magnificent decor and costumes added considerably to the over-all enchantment of these performances. On the third, fourth and fifth evenings, there are passages of pantomime and pageantry that seem unduly long in the first act and Frederick Ashton's devising of the rather inane and music-hallish Garland Dance does not do full credit to Britain's great choreographer.

Margot Fonteyn was, as usual, superb throughout and especially so in her Rose *adagio* and in her third act variation and the *pas de deux* with Michael Somes. Somes, incidentally, makes a handsome and believable Prince and bears himself accordingly. Moira Shearer's debut performance on Friday night, September 15th, found her at the peak of her artistry and giving quite the best performance she has yet offered us in New York. Her precision and brilliant technique are, of course, accepted accomplishments but, in addition, she has grown tremendously emotionally and her characterisations are much more fully developed. She was lyrically at her best in the Vision scene while her third

act variation fairly sparkled with bravura brilliance. I also consistently admired her use of her arms and, especially, her fluid and graceful wrists. Beryl Grey's Aurora was beautifully phrased musically while her characterisation was gracious, regal and completely winning, as a princess should be. John Hart provided good support to both Shearer and Grey, with his second performance considerably less pompous but more natural and every bit as prince-like. One also wonders how John Field would appear in this role of Prince Florimund—perhaps a shade more poetic and intense.

Seeing *The Sleeping Beauty* so frequently provides a fine opportunity to study the importance of the two really motivating roles of the ballet—the Lilac Fairy and Carabosse. Both balance each other remarkably and these roles were magnificently performed by Beryl Grey and Frederick Ashton. Miss Grey, of course, has made the Lilac Fairy hers alone and even the usually gifted Pamela May could not dispel this memory. Miss May, as a matter of fact, seemed uneven and aggressive in movement though her pantomime came across quite well. On the other hand, Rosemary Lindsay's Lilac Fairy was sweet and gracious but lacking in the glow that Grey always gives the role. Carabosse is, of course, one of Ashton's great characterisations and his witch is evil and yet very witty in a sardonic fashion. Ray Powell gave a very valid matinee performance in the same role, making his witch wicked, rather more tragic than witty, and thus, essentially, more frightening. As I mentioned earlier, it is just this shading in interpretation, always, of course, without distortion of the basic role, that makes it so interesting for us to see various company

members have a try at the same role.

Afterthoughts After The First Week—It does seem too bad that Violetta Elvin is being relegated almost to *corps de ballet* roles with Alexander Grant, Ray Powell, Kenneth Melville and Franklin White not faring much better. . . . John Field, who usually looks so well, should be supplied with a more becoming wig for his role as The First Prince in *The Sleeping Beauty* Julia Farron is one of the most beautiful English girls who has appeared in America since Penelope Ward came over in 1946 to appear in *Lady Windermere's Fan* How much stronger, especially in arm and hand movements, is Brian Shaw than is Alexis Rassiné in *The Blue Bird pas de deux* Florestan and His Two Sisters, as danced by Kenneth Macmillan, Gerd Larsen and Nadia Nerina, has been one of the minor delights of the present season.

Though we have now come to know *Le Lac des Cygnes* and *The Sleeping Beauty* much better, the major interest of the New York season lies just ahead. There is an enormous public interest in *Giselle* and how this testing role will be interpreted by Margot Fonteyn and Moira Shearer. It is also going to be more than interesting to see Beryl Grey and John Field in *Les Patineurs* now that we have Ballet Theatre's former presentation of it as a measuring stick. There is also considerable anticipation over what may prove to be the really controversial ballets in this season's repertoire—Ninette de Valois' *Don Quixote* and Frederick Ashton's revival of *Dante Sonata*. Both these works appear to have received a rather mixed reception in London and it will indeed be interesting to see how they are received by American critics and audiences. Well, we shall soon see.

SADLER'S WELLS IN NEW YORK (I)

by FRANKLIN WHITE

NEW YORK once more. Having been here a few hours, I find I have lost all sense of newness to this city. In fact, I seem to know it all better than I did before, yet, last evening in England I would have hesitated to tell the numbers on, say, the Fifth Avenue bus. I had forgotten many little things, like the boys on the sidewalk inviting you to "shine 'em up"—and people coming up to you with hard luck stories. But all this has lost the surprise that I knew before. Only Rockefeller Plaza, that set of comparatively simple, yet immensely high buildings, and the view over the Park from the St. Moritz Hotel, of trees bordered by skyscrapers, have that old feeling of thrill. I also have affection for Sixth and Third Avenues, as both hold memories of walks home at early hours of the morning

after yet another perfect evening with some of my very good friends here.

There is just one difference. I seem to notice a little more hurry, and, well, perhaps the road sweeping van was just due for its round.

In the evening we were in London, then a late nightcap in Iceland, before a few hours sleep, and finally here. Over three thousand miles travelling. I know it is nothing new or out of the ordinary these days, but I still find it quite fantastic.

At Covent Garden, on Tuesday, September 5th, a large crowd gathered to see us off. It quite resembled one of our gala nights, as sightseers lined the police station rails watching the antics of friends, relatives, press, and even the police moving us on. Bow Street



JOHN FIELD, BERYL GREY, RUTH ST. DENIS, VIOLETTA ELVIN AND ALEXIS RASSINE OUTSIDE THE SPECIAL WINDOW DISPLAY OF SADLER'S WELLS BALLET GIVEN BY ROGER KENT AND ARRANGED BY ARTHUR TODD

*Photograph by
Berrard Goldberg*

became quite impassable, as "last minute" farewell photos were carefully posed for half an hour before we were due to leave! Possibly by now a great many photos have appeared of us all standing in front of a handsome looking plane with its propellers hurling around, gaily waving goodbye, and looking as though we were to be mown down at any second. Possibly they are very nice photos and it all looks very glamorous. So it was, when some three hours later, after being well wine and dined by B.A.O.C. we did leave—on quite a different plane! These technical inaccuracies are, I am sure, unavoidable and of little importance, but I do find them rather amusing. So I am sure P. W. Manchester will forgive me when I "let her cat out of the bag" and say the photos in *Ballet Today* of our arrival in New York last year, bearing the caption proclaiming that these were the boys of the company putting their feet on American soil for the first time, was, in fact, taken some three hours after that ceremonious occasion, after we had been through the laborious business of customs and emigration, then had been taken back once more on to the airfield! The picture was again taken in front of a different plane than the one we flew in on. In any case, had we really been just landing we must all have been travelling with the pilot in the cockpit, for it was by that door that we were emerging!

At 9.45, having had only fifteen minutes delay, in a mass of floodlight we crossed over to the giant strato-cruiser, looking even heavier and more earthbound to the slightly excited. A final wave towards the black mass on one side that were our friends, and over the gangway, with its concealed lighting, waiting officials,

and crew. There, waiting for us at the top of the gangway, were the same steward who had been with the boys' plane last time and the stewardess who had been with the girls. What more perfect touch could have been added?

A grey sleekness of deep felt and fluorescent lighting covered all inside, and one sank down into the comfort of deep armchairs tilting in a way reminiscent of a dentist's chair . . . and with just a little of that same type of apprehension. After periods of not flying there is for me always a feeling of excitement when the engine's flint begins to whine and then breaks into a roar. Soon, we taxied away to the runway and paused for that final warming up of the engines. I think this must be the time when thoughts of the forthcoming flight rise to their climax. What type of take-off will this be? How will this type of plane react during the flight? Will it be bumpy? Then, the fast motion forward transfers all thought of the future to the present. Exhilaration grows, and just at the moment when it is becoming uncomfortable, the ground is suddenly way below. With it comes the first slight lilt and feeling of balance in the air. Then the sound of the engines dies down and with it the vibration and sparks from the exhaust. Only a red glow remains visible.

So, we left England on what is to be the longest and most prolific tour that this company has ever attempted.

Soon safety straps came off, and all the new clothes, to be put aside for something a little more practical for Iceland weather and a night's flying, until they would be required for the landing receptions of

welcome in New York.

In three hours after the take-off, we were circling round the pattern of runways and coloured lights of Keflavik airport. The heavy machine lowered itself into landing position, sometimes lurching rather more heavily than was comfortable for one's inside. There was a slight whine as the wing flaps lowered, followed first by the sensation of speed, and then the lights changed from a yellow streak into individual lights passing at ever lengthening distances of time. The first landing was over.

In clothes suitable to the country, we crossed over to where hot drinks awaited us. Activity was prevalent everywhere. A Constellation roared over, landed and taxied round near me, silhouetted by the flood lights. A mass of scurrying creatures, petrol tanks, gangways and other accessories moving around, all rather resembling a whale with its retinue of small fish in attendance. This place served as a reminder of the breakfast of bacon and eggs we had there last year. This time, just coffee and an hour's rest before we were off on the "ten hours, thirty-two minutes and thirty seconds", as the steward meticulously announced in all solemnity.

Some hours later, I was awakened by the glare of sheets of changing light moving all over the sky. I remember seeing Northern lights on one of those freak occasions many years ago when they appeared all over England, and I seem to remember the colour. Nevertheless, this sight was sufficiently eerie, if not wonderful. When I finally came round from that heavy daze, we were flying into a grey-white haze, with a carpet of broken clouds below. Behind, over the only definable line of the horizon, were the first sights of the sun rising into this flat world, prolonged by our progress away from it. Beside me a sleeping form,

with her blanket-shrouded legs perched at a precarious angle over the back of the seat and head of the dancer in front, showed in the half light.

Over ten and a half hours is a long time to fly non-stop. Broken sleep killed half of the time, followed by breakfast of various delicacies served on trays of many compartments and finishing with bowls of fruit.

Then, on and on travelling through a sea of glaring mist. Occasionally, as we passed through the various cloud levels, a patch of the cold-looking Atlantic would appear, dotted with small ice-floes bordered by foam and reflecting the sun. A surge upwards as we crossed the Newfoundland coast: low lying red-brown rock, shrubby conifers covered in frost and frozen water everywhere. That country looks at least fifty per cent. waterways and lakes. Then back into the clouds for long periods of time. On this plane at least there were other compartments to wander into, and another level even nearer to those large engines suspended on frail looking wings, steadily beating all night, through the long dawn, and into the day, until as we came down over Long Island, the Manhattan skyscrapers appeared in the distance. Our plane had not been expected until some hours later, so naturally there was not quite such a large reception as last time. Nevertheless, it was some hours before we finished with photographers and the usual formalities and were deposited at our various hotels.

How quickly New York can change its shape. Several buildings that were not much more than foundations less than a year ago are now complete. The block of offices next to the Met., which last year drove us mad with the sound of rivetting, then reaching the level of our sixth floor rehearsal room, is now complete, away above with some eighty floors and most of them tenanted.



THE COMPANY
WAVING THEIR
GOODBYES AT
HEATH ROW (EVEN
IF THEY DID NOT
TAKE OFF FOR A
LONG TIME AFTER)

Photograph by
G.B.L. Wilson

On the whole, there was little work to do, mostly classes, (getting rid of that feeling of still flying) the rehearsing of individual roles, a run-through of *Le Lac des Cygnes* (the opening ballet) on stage and giving the students into the three classical ballets. They are mostly the same lot we had last year and are equally thrilled to be with us. They create an atmosphere of excited importance among themselves much in contrast to how one sometimes feels, even though one may not show it, after doing the same "standing on" parts for nine years or so.

Sunday, the day of our opening, could not have been more depressing. A grey drizzle covered New York, with the humidity well in the nineties. Smoke coming from some skyscraper flues seemed trapped in a low heavy, slow-drifting clouds which enveloped the tops of most tall buildings. The better part of the Empire State disappeared for the day. Even the steam rising from the grids of underground heating was added to the general stickiness, and one went home feeling wet and hot all day.

It was to be expected that there could not be the same first night atmosphere as last time; the rather tense apprehension, turning into exuberant relief at the uncertainty of our success. Both sides of the footlights more or less knew what to expect, but on our part there was a great deal to live up to. In our absence, they might even have built us up out of proportion to reality, and that eventuality was, I think, in the minds of some of us. The wings were not crowded out as last year, everyone just went about as for a usual performance, except butterflies inside seemed to be a common complaint from all. Generally, there seemed a realisation of the responsibility, a determination to make an equal success this time.

Le Lac des Cygnes is a more accumulative ballet than *The Sleeping Beauty* from the point of audience responsiveness. There is not such a large spectacle at the beginning, of entrance after entrance of groups in colourful costumes, followed quickly with many variations which give many more opportunities for applause. I do not want to give the impression that we were not received as well as last year—far from it. It just built up until the end of the Black Swan *pas de deux*, at which time all previous control broke down entirely. There was not the immediate round of clapping on the rise of the curtain—the first coming at the entrance of the Prince. Cheers broke out at the end of the first variation of the *pas de trois*, and of course, Margot Fonteyn received a terrific ovation at her entrance. Things went smoothly, with two calls and a certain amount of voice appreciation being the general level, until, as I said, the coda when the whole house seemed unable to control itself any longer, and one and all simply yelled. It was a wonderful sound at that moment, starting before the last *pirouette*

and working up and up until the end when it came simultaneously as one crash of verbal sound. What a moment for all of us standing around! To say that we were moved is very much an understatement, as each time the Prince and Princess came on and that yell broke out. Everyone concerned in the entire ballet waited until the end, and took calls with the Swans, while piles of flowers were carried on and presented to many people. The humidity in the house was so great that many of the audience appeared, from the stage, to be more informally dressed than usual for a first night. A constant fanning of programmes was visible. In spite of this, in conditions that made any exertion an effort, they still called us back time after time, even after the house lights came up. What a wonderful sight that always is, especially at opera houses like the Met. with the chandelier's pink lights, and gold decoration backing a standing audience still applauding hard. They are wonderful moments, and how perfect to come at the end of our return performance in America.

(To be continued)

"L'Enfant Prodiges" at the Mercury

THE tale of the prodigal son must be one of the oldest of those basic stories of which man never tires: however often it is retold, with whatever new slant, it holds an elemental fascination, and this fascination wins half the battle for Wormser's *L'Enfant Prodiges* before the curtain rises. During the first few minutes, one must make a definite effort of adjustment to the new idiom, a similar experience to that of seeing ballet for the first time: but once the initial shock is over, everything seems easy and indeed inevitable.

Although the programme states that *L'Enfant Prodiges* was originally produced in a less stylised way than that of the traditional mime of the Funambules and the brothers Debureau, one cannot resist a sneaking desire to see this play produced in the highly specialised style of the Barrault school of mime. In default of this, trained dancers, with their musical reaction and expressive movement, seem plainly indicated. It must be difficult to do this kind of thing "cold" and we cannot blame the actors if they appear stilted: naturally the two dancers—Miss Yoma Sasburgh and Miss Celia Franca—came off best, and while they held the stage the performance became entirely convincing. It was a pleasant novelty, too, to find oneself for once thinking how ideally the Mercury stage and auditorium lent itself to the spectacle, instead of feeling "If only they had a bigger stage, and weren't nearly falling into our laps all the time!" Indeed, one felt that in a larger hall much of the charm of this unusual piece of theatre might evaporate altogether. JANET SINCLAIR.

BALLET THEATRE 1950

By MARY CLARKE

BALLET THEATRE returned to London after four long years with a new title—American National Ballet Theatre—and a substantial repertoire packed into two all too short weeks. Seeing important works for the first time in such close juxtaposition meant making a special effort to avoid choreographic indigestion and particularly to avoid slighting one ballet because another in the same genre had been seen the previous night. Some people did, I think, succumb to the malady (and then blamed the company for their own dyspepsia) but those of us who managed to survive came through in a rare state of exhilaration.

Ballet Theatre is not, admittedly, a quite perfect company, and every ballet in its repertoire is not a masterpiece, yet the cumulative effect is extraordinarily warm and satisfying. One gets the impression that these people really care about human beings and about the world they live in. They are most successful when interpreting places and people that they understand—by experience or inheritance—and they can present well nigh-perfect ballet evocations of sailors in New York, small town folk in Fall River, or three insecure Greenwich Village types. When it comes to

French Romantic or Russian classical ballet they are a little less sure and the illusion falters, yet there are individuals in the company with such a precise and beautiful grasp of these schools of dancing that probably only careful and patient rehearsal is needed to bring the whole company into line.

During their two weeks in London the company showed thirteen ballets, representing the work of eight contemporary choreographers, five of them Americans. The American flavour of the company seemed stronger than ever and in this respect the new title seems justified. On the other hand it must be remembered that the works shown in London do not comprise anything like the company's full repertoire and that there had been several last minute changes in personnel which may have affected the choice of ballets. More seriously, there had been a last minute change of conductor and musically the season was not on so high a level as in other respects.

Unfortunately programme arrangements did not present the ballets to the best possible advantage although this may have been partly due to the necessity of packing so much into so short a season. The absence

ERIC BRAUN IN
THE FIRST SAIL-
OR'S SOLO IN
"FANCY FREE"



*Photograph by
courtesy of The
Scotsman and
Evening Dis-
patch*

Tudor, Laing and Adams detracted seriously from the Tudor ballets shown: *Pillar of Fire*, despite the enduring performances of Kaye, Chase and Vance the three sisters, showed signs of needing more rehearsal under its choreographer, and *Romeo and Juliet* is also a little shabby, a little ragged. In these two ballets James Mitchell and Igor Youskevitch respectively took over Laing's roles at short notice and both should eventually be admirable; at present, however, they do not seem to have entirely mastered Tudor's very individual choreographic style.

The two big popular successes of the season were byagnes de Mille, whose comedy ballets in 1946 had made relatively little impression. In *Fall River Legend* and *Rodeo* she emerged as a serious choreographer with quite extraordinary sense of theatrical values. She is not a great innovator or creator and quite obviously *Fall River Legend* could never have existed without Tudor (and Nora Kaye) or *Rodeo* without *Billy the Kid*. agnes de Mille, in allowing these pioneers to influence her work, has shown an awareness of important contemporary developments and also a mastery of her medium that add up to a unique gift in themselves. *Fall River Legend*, viewed dispassionately, has many faults and longeurs; its impact is due to the fact that the audience is never given the opportunity of viewing it dispassionately since sympathy for Lizzie Borden never alters. The story of disappointment, frustration and desperate unhappiness is quite clearly presented and with sufficient detail and dance interest to hold one's attention at repeated viewings. To a very large degree, of course, the ballet's effect depends on Nora Kaye's performance and without her superb artistry it would look very different, but it is only fair to recognise that agnes de Mille created the ballet especially for Kaye, recognising a great artist and content to give her scope for a great performance. The extent to which she succeeded in this was evident from the nightly ovations which Nora Kaye received in London; her performance is one which has already entered ballet history.

Rodeo, a gay, folksy affair with a sure-fire appeal story of how an ugly duckling turned into a swan and got her man, could not fail to be a success. With its enchanting Copland score, clear colours and infectious good humour it presented a picture of the American south-west that everyone could recognise from *Oklahoma!* and utilised simple Square Dance patterns in a most attractive fashion. The company put the ballet across beautifully and Allyn McLerie and John Kriza made endearing characters of the Cowgirl and the Champion Roper.

It was a great pity that *Billy the Kid* was shown for the first time on the night following *Rodeo* and then as the first ballet on the programme; it merits more careful treatment than this. The ballet was created by Loring in 1938 for Kirstein's Ballet Caravan and was



Photograph by Lido

ERIC BRAUN, JOHN KRIZA AND PAUL GODKIN POSE ON LEITH DOCKS AS THE SAILORS IN "FANCY FREE"

acquired by Ballet Theatre during its first seasons when Loring himself appeared as Billy. Like *Rodeo*, it has a beautiful Copland score, as haunting and sad as a cowboy lament. The costumes by Jared French are balletic in style and attractive in colour although more successful for the street scene crowds than for the principal characters. Symbolism is introduced a little naïvely in the person of Alias and in the opening and closing marches with their implication of frontiers being steadily pushed back, and I think Loring might have made his effect more vividly by merely suggesting these historical parallels and concentrating on his story. For the story itself is brilliantly developed in terms of dance movement and the invention and characterisation in the choreography is extraordinarily subtle. Kriza plays Billy the killer with complete conviction but I thought his first appearance suggested rather a halfwit than a child and the costume for this scene should be changed, for it is nonsense to pretend that anyone with Kriza's shoulders is a boy of twelve.

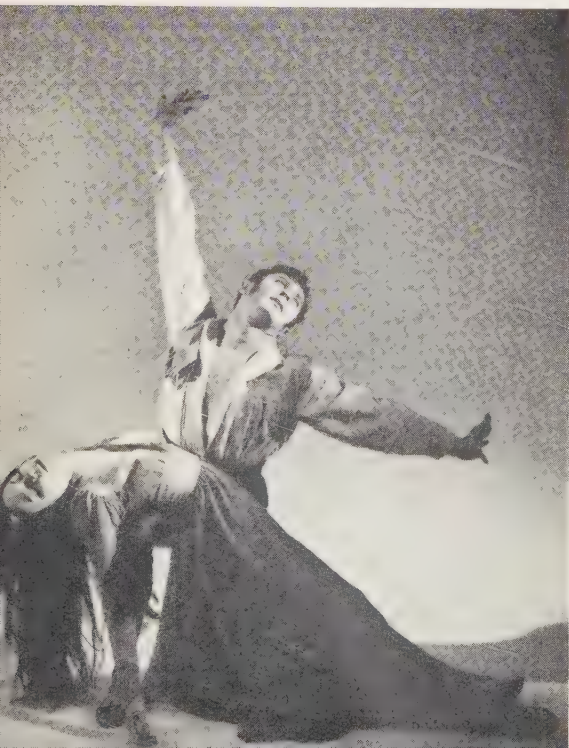
Jerome Robbins was represented by three ballets, the incomparable *Fancy Free*, *Interplay* and *Facsimile*. *Fancy Free* is just about the perfect character ballet. It is so good that all kinds of things can happen to it and it is still the best tonic in the ballet repertoire. Of the original cast only Kriza remains to dispense his own particular brand of sentimental charm, but in place of Robbins we have Paul Godkin's extrovert, while

Eric Braun (an excellent dancer) tags along as the tough little first sailor. They are a different trio—but they are still three wonderful guys. Norma Vance has stepped charmingly into the *pas de deux* and Mary Burr is fine as the last comer, but I found Allyn McLerie far less incisive than Muriel Bentley as the owner of the red purse; she dances in a manner more suitable for *On The Town* than *Fancy Free*.

Interplay is almost as good and lacks only individuality of characterisation. In this kind of anything-you-can-do-I-can-do-better ballet every performance has to be a top notch one, for the choreography is anything but easy. It needs eight very good dancers and Ballet Theatre comes up with them every time. Amongst the present cast, Dorothy Scott emerges as a precise and most attractive young dancer and Paul Godkin's solo is a show stopper.

Facsimile, created in 1946, marked the beginning of Robbins's "serious" phase. It concerns three "insecure" people, sophisticated neurotics who torture themselves and each other with their passions and subsequent satiation. It is all very brilliantly worked out, with a wry and bitter humour and fundamental disgust. Kaye, Kriza and Mitchell interpret it vividly and Oliver Smith and Leonard Bernstein aid and abet. Robbins undoubtedly succeeded in accomplishing what he set out to do and my only doubt is as to whether the whole thing was worth doing in the first place.

JOHN KRIZA AND RUTH KOESUN IN "CAPRICHOS"



It was curious to see Robbins's and Balanchine's ballets interpreted by another American company so soon after the New York City Ballet's season, and it would have been even more interesting had some of the ballets been the same. In Balanchine's *Theme and Variations*, Ballet Theatre gave indication of an easy grasp of his style although the ballet was sorely hampered by quite impossible costumes and settings while the orchestra was far from satisfactory. I persist in believing that these new Balanchine "classics" gain when interpreted by great classic dancers like Alonso and Youskevitch and certainly Youskevitch seems to have inspired Balanchine in the male choreography for this ballet.

John Taras, who was first encouraged as a choreographer by Ballet Theatre, is now represented by his best ballet, *Designs With Strings*. In Irene Sharaff's ravishing dark tutus it has a touch of sophistication that is new and the mood is no longer so adolescent. But it is still a charming little ballet and showed Mary Ellen Moylan to better advantage than anything else she did in London. Norma Vance and Michael Lland were also entirely satisfying in the ballet.

A choreographer new to London (in fact that rare phenomenon, a new choreographer) was Herbert Ross whose *Caprichos* was acquired by the company after its first showing at the Choreographer's Workshop in New York. The inspiration, derived from Goya's commentaries to his *Caprichos* etchings, inevitably dictated the flavour of the ballet which displeased many people, but to me it seemed an honest, almost pitiful, denunciation of vice rather than a deliberate exploitation for theatrical purposes. Choreographically it was equally individual and honest, dance movements being used sparingly and vividly while there was no obsession with technicalities for their own sake. The episodes were not, perhaps, sufficiently welded together to form a complete ballet but the experiment was valuable and it will be interesting to see how Ross develops. In choice of music (Bela Bartok's *Contrasts*) he shows exceptional sensibility.*

From *Caprichos* to *Giselle* is a far cry yet Alicia Alonso, as remarkable in the "No Te Escaparás" episode as she used to be in *Undertow*, gave a performance as *Giselle* that ranked among the highest. Hampered by a muddled production, horrible orchestration, erratic tempi, and settings and costumes too sophisticated for the simple choreography, she triumphed with an interpretation of delicacy, ethereality and pure classic style, in the Markova tradition yet wholly individual.

* Ross, in collaboration with John Ward, has since created three more ballets in America: *Pierrot and the Moon* (Stravinsky), an allegory; *The Thief Who Loved a Ghost* (Julian Freedman), described as "low comedy à la Molière"; and *Rose House* (Ravel), a Japanese fable.

BYR YOUSKE-
CH AND THE
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IN "THEME
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photograph by
courtesy of The
Swissman and
Evening Dis-
patch



he had the supreme advantage of appearing with Youskevitch, who is one of the great Albrechts of our generation, and I suggest that Ballet Theatre immediately set to work to raise their whole production to a level worthy of these two artists. Nora Kaye also gave one performance of *Giselle*, intelligent, well danced and indicating full understanding of the character yet defeated by sheer physical and temperamental unsuitability. In Mary Ellen Moylan the company has acquired a potentially remarkable Queen of the Wilis.

There remains the various classical *pas de deux* and *Helen of Troy*—all immensely successful in 1946, far less sensational this year. The company were obviously peeved at the different reception and we can only plead that (a) we are now more accustomed to brilliant dancing than we were then, and (b) the performances were not, on the whole, as good. Great dancer though he is, Youskevitch is not quite the "show-off" that lifts the roof in these numbers; his Black Swan solo was nothing short of terrific, I know, but all the time I longed to see him and Alonso dance the full version. Alonso tended to be a little erratic, Kaye rather mechanical and Mary Ellen Moylan seemed quite out of her element. John Kriza does not have the physique of a *danseur noble*, and in classical work his usually engaging personality disappears and is replaced by an air of uncertainty. In *Helen of Troy*,

however, his *Hermes* is the only character to prove immortal. The ballet is otherwise in an unhappy state and could do with a long rest.

In conclusion I would like to add a word of appreciation for the young dancers, mostly newcomers since 1946, who provided so many admirable performances in secondary roles. If an Oscar were to be awarded for the "best supporting performance" I should be tempted to vote for at least four dancers—Michael Lland and Scott Douglas (for pure classical style), and Ruth Ann Koesun and Peter Gladke (for character dancing)—except that Lucia Chase herself, as the Stepmother in *Fall River Legend*, would undoubtedly walk away with every possible award, as well as our thanks for bringing her company to London again.

Editorial Comment—(continued from page 3)

they may or may not be needed at the Royal Opera House.

To finish in a kindlier vein, Maryon Lane and David Blair danced delightfully at a recent matinee in the *pas de deux* from *Giselle*. Blair has tidied up his technique to excellent advantage, and his arms and hands have much improved.

P.W.M.

STRAVINSKY'S "SOLDIER'S TALE" IN SALZBURG

by J. F. McDUGALL

THIS is a ballet which had intrigued me for years.

The whole story of the ballet, embedded in Russian folk-lore, its history dating from the lean years of the Diaghilev Company, and the impact the music had made on me when I first heard it, had all combined to keep me on the watch for a possible performance. When this came it was rather unexpected.

A few months ago I was attending a UNESCO seminar by one of the lakes in the Austrian Salzkammergut region when I learned that a performance of *Die Geschichte vom Soldaten* was to be given in Salzburg on July 1st at the Park-Theatre of the Schloss Leopoldskron, once a palace of the mighty archbishops, now the home of the seminar of American studies.

A party of us hired a bus and drove the forty-odd kilometres. Rain was threatening and summer lighting played around the crests of the Dachstein, the Schafberg, towering over St. Wolfgang See, around the Grossglockner and away to the west, on the crest of Berchtesgaden. A fitting night for the devil to tempt and win the soul of a soldier.

The Schloss Leopoldskron lies a little way out of Salzburg. To reach its open-air Park-Theatre we passed through the formal gardens of the palace, past the murky, placid waters of its lake, our path lit feebly by lanterns hung from trees every ten metres or so. The amphitheatre is a somewhat ruined Renaissance private theatre seating about one hundred and fifty, with large wooden bench seats, broken statuary around the stage area and a small artificial lake stretching back behind the stage, which is simply of flagstones and seemed somewhat littered with broken masonry.

The orchestra was already in position at the side of the stage when we came in—"in" being understood as into the grove of trees which surrounds the theatre. The orchestra for this ballet is, of course, a rather unusual combination of seven—violin, bassoon, clarinet, flute, trumpet, French horn and percussion. They had been rehearsing right up to the arrival of the audience.

The spotlights stood naked on their stands around the stage. On the stage itself was a table and chair where the narrator would sit, commenting on and explaining the action. Centre stage was another table—a flagstone on a small log—with two other logs for seats, where the devil and the soldier would play their drunken game of cards. Stage left, a straw mattress awaited the princess. That was all, but the dark, shaking trees, the flecks of light on the lake, the flickering lightning and the low rumble of thunder gave a magical atmosphere to it all.

The spotlights came on. The narrator in open shirt and denim trousers entered and sat down. The orchestra began the overture. Without fuss the "ballet" began.

The soldier, returning from the wars, stumbled on, picked up his violin and played. A spotlight wavered across the lake and picked up an old man rowing towards the stage. The devil in disguise stepped ashore and traded his magic book for the soldier's violin, for the soldier's soul.

The *mise en scène* (arranged by Gianofranco de Bosio) made thorough use of the natural surroundings—the devil appears from the trees, joins the statues on on the pedestals and at the end leads the soldier, now a dead man, down and apparently into the lake.

I put quotes around the word "ballet" for only a part of the performance was danced. As the programme said, it was "*gelesen, gespielt und getanzt*". Only the roles of the princess and the latter part of the devil's role were truly balletic; the rest was acted, spoken or narrated.

The famous French mime, Marcel Marceau, danced

NORA KAYE, WHOSE PERFORMANCE IN "FALL RIVER LEGEND" HAS BEEN ONE OF THE OUTSTANDING EVENTS OF THE YEAR



devil's part. I had seen him in solo work a few nights previously in an intimate theatre in Salzburg. His style and appearance he seemed to be very close to Merrault, but he was his equal in accomplishment and had something unique in his mystical and symbolic qualities. To the part of the devil he brought an intensity and athletic bizarreness wholly in keeping with the mood and the music.

I wished for better choreography for the princess. Her dances seemed to me out of keeping with the rest of the performance. The dancer, Hertha Bade, did what was asked of her with a fluid grace.

As the narrator, Guenther Hanke read the heroic couplets of C. F. Ramuz with intelligence and a beautifully controlled voice. Herbert Wochinz as the soldier and Pinkas Braun taking the acting part of the devil, carried their parts with a reserve, astringency most, which surprised me in German actors. But how well it suited the intensity of the drama.

The question of combining voice, dance and drama successfully is still an open one. In this setting and by this company I think the marriage was a fairly happy one. The drama came across without a break in the evening; the dancing grew out of the drama and heightened the meaning of the words. I wonder how it would transfer to a stage?

A final word about the orchestra. Apart from a few minor lapses from the woodwind, it seemed to me, a very amateur musician, that they played a difficult score with intelligence, feeling and rare taste.

The ballet intrigues me more than ever now, and I shall continue to keep an eye cocked for a stage performance.

General Post in Fairyland

by LIONEL BRADLEY

THE notice of Ballet Theatre's production of *Giselle* in *The Stage* for September 7th ends with the sentence: "Youskevitch . . . made a worthy Siegfried". I cannot believe that Youskevitch is ever anything but worthy. But was he Siegfried? The suggestion opens up a field of entrancing possibilities which demand to be explored. I have long felt that it is unreasonable that the heroes and heroines of ballet should be confined strictly within the limits of one plot. Change is good for everyone. And the more I think of it, the more firmly I am convinced that Siegfried would make an ideal husband for Giselle.

Having no prior attachment, he will avoid all that fuss and bother with the local landlord and his daughter. Giselle is so sweet and refined that the Princess Mother will soon be reconciled when she finds that her difficult son has been rescued from those rude and drunken huntsmen. There may be a little trouble with Hilarion

but he can be given a better job elsewhere—perhaps under Prince Florimund. Really there should be nothing to cloud the happiness of the loving pair except the fear that Giselle may die prematurely from the athlete's heart, or whatever it is, from which she suffers. And the stately dances of a Court are less likely to injure her than the difficult feats which she has attempted on her own.

Albrecht may well seek consolation with Princess Aurora. He seems to have a taste for young girls and Aurora is a perpetual sixteen. It is true there was some sort of "arrangement" with Bathilde. But the daughter of a Duke, even a duke of Courland, must surely yield place to the only child and heir of King Florestan XXIV.

I wish, too, that it could be Dr. Coppelius who was invited to the President's Christmas party. With all his skill, he would not be content with a mere Nutcracker and four clock-work toys such as Drosselmayer provided. He would be on his mettle and would surely bring such a profusion of wonderful toys that there would be no need for the children to quarrel and little Clara would not need to lose her sleep by getting up to make sure that all is well.

Someone must be found to take his place in Saint-Léon's ballet. Why not the shopkeeper from *La Boutique Fantasque*? Apart from a pardonable irritation with his assistant, he is a kindly and benevolent old man, tolerant even of the seven dreadful children who invade his shop. Think how solicitous he is when the little "accident" happens to the tiresome American boy. He would not want to cause any trouble to Franz and Swanilda and as soon as he found out what had happened, he would quietly explain the matter to them and have a good laugh over it. . . . Or perhaps he would just take Franz aside and let him into the secret, for his toys really do come to life, without the use of any noxious drugs or incantations.

Bouquet of the Month



This month's bouquet (perhaps it should really be a nosegay) is for Barbara Lloyd of the American National Ballet Theatre for her tiny, tiny part in *Fall River Legend* as the girl with the "crush" on the preacher. Her wave and giggle will long be remembered.

BALLET AT THE VENICE FESTIVAL

By FERDINAND REYNA

PRESENT-DAY reactions of Italian critics and public to a season of ballet are somewhat disconcerting. Through the break with the great tradition, long isolation and the bad influence of a school which is not up to date with the evolution of academic laws, Italian criticism seems to regard ballet—whether Petipa or Balanchine, *Giselle* or *Casse Noisette*—purely in the light of academic exercises belonging to an outdated era. Thus the Venetian public are filled with the wonderful Theatre La Fenice during the international festival of music and ballet from the 4th to 20th September, appeared more at ease with *Le Jeune Homme et la Mort* of Roland Petit, than the admirable *Concerto Barocco* of Balanchine. Elsewhere, during the four productions shown at Venice by the Grand Ballet of the Marquis de Cuevas, the ballet scored a considerable victory. The Italians had been quick to cry sacrilege while awaiting Balanchine's *La Somnambule*, to Bellini's immortal music, and the *Tristan Fou* of Dali-Massine-Wagner. In fact, the audiences of La Fenice were obsessed by these two works, which received an overwhelmingly enthusiastic reception. On the other hand, the romantic spirit of *Les Sylphides* did not much appeal to the audience, who were equally unimpressed by the *Black Swan*, magnificently danced by Rosella Hightower and André Eglevsky.

For all these reasons, a better welcome was reserved for the Ballet Theatre of New York, which also gave four triumphant performances. This was the more

remarkable because the Italian public is not quick to applaud in the theatre, and often shows itself disappointingly cool towards artists.

Amongst the ballets presented by Ballet Theatre, those which most impressed the public were *Fall River Legend*, by Agnes de Mille; *Fancy Free* and *Interplay*, by Jerome Robbins, rather than Antony Tudor's *Pillar of Fire* and Balanchine's *Theme and Variations*; or even the latter's *Apollo Musagetes* with Stravinsky's music: The abstract beauty inherent in the last two masterpieces seemed to escape the Italian public, which on the other hand was wildly amused by de Mille's *Rodeo* and Eugene Loring's *Billy the Kid*, with music by Aaron Copland.

The precision of the *corps de ballet*, which appears to have been well drilled in every movement, made a very great impression at Venice. Nora Kaye received the greatest share of admiration for her interpretation of the company's modern ballets.

It remains for us to notice the ballets of the Biennale, that is to say, two works by Aurel Milloss, *The Wooden Prince*, with a very fine score composed by Bela Bartok in 1914, and *Ballade sans Musique*, described by the programme as "scenic images", on a script by the scene-painter Toti Scialoja, who was also responsible for the staging. It should be explained that in Italy there are no ballet companies; the choreographer, when commissioned to compose one or more ballets, has to seek his interpreters where he can find



THE MARQUIS DE CUEVAS ON THE TERRACE OF THE HOTEL DANIELI, VENICE, WITH FERDINANDO BALLO, ORGANISER OF THE FESTIVAL

Foto-Giacomelli-Venezia

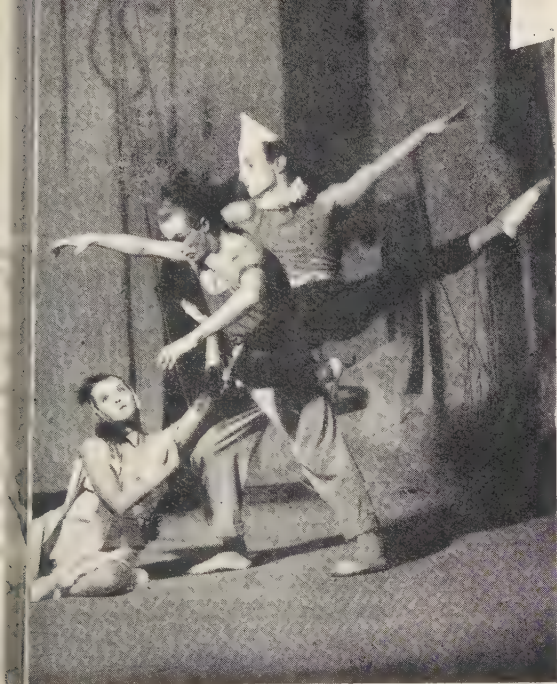


Foto-Giacomelli-Venezia

YOLANDE RAPALLO, YUREK SHABELEVSKY AND FILIPPO MORUCCI IN "BALLADE SANS MUSIQUE" BY AUREL MILLOSS

hem, and they will be scattered again after the performances. On this occasion Aurel Milloss had brought from Paris to Venice, Irène Skorik and Vladimir Skouratoff; Yurek Shabelevsky came from Milan, and the *corps de ballet* was supplied mainly by the Opera at Rome.

The Wooden Prince is a banal fairy tale, on which the choreographer has embroidered without troubling about originality. Vladimir Skouratoff endowed the role of the wooden prince with his own powerful personality.

The costumes and decor of Toti Scialoja were interesting. Other artists dancing in both the Milloss ballets were Yolande Rapallo, Walter Zappolini, Alberto Moro and Filippo Morucci.

Ballade sans Musique was in some ways the more interesting of the two. Its theme is the disappointment of modern man through his illusions up to final resignation. The choreography, emphasised by sound effects, is really pantomime and can only be regarded as dancing at the points where music is introduced. Interesting oddities are not lacking throughout the "scenic images", which remind us of Laban and the German school of thirty years ago. Toti Scialoja's setting is astonishing; with negligible resources he has succeeded in evolving a decor which is a masterpiece of its kind. The principal parts in this ballet were danced by Irène Skorik, Yurek Shabelevsky and Vladimir Skouratoff.



Foto-Giacomelli-Venezia

VLADIMIR SKOURATOFF IN "THE WOODEN PRINCE", THE SECOND AUREL MILLOSS BALLET, AT THE VENICE FESTIVAL

At the same time as these performances, two exhibitions on the ballet were opened at Venice. One was of the works of the well-known scenic artist Eugene Bermann, in the magnificent galleries of the Correr Palace. The other exhibition, which was particularly associated with the Venetian ballet during the 17th and 18th Centuries, was in the foyer of the Theatre La Fenice, and displayed a series of rare books, pictures, and choreographic documents from the great libraries and collections of Venice, never before shown to the public. Also on show were ballet designs by the Parisian painter, Jean Target.

Ferdinando Ballo, the organiser of the international festival of music, is to be congratulated on having placed ballet this year in the first rank, in defiance of the criticisms of those who claim to be the defenders of music. At all events, the public flocked to Theatre La Fenice in greater numbers than to the concerts.

Italian dancers have great possibilities, both for technique and mime, but the chaotic situation arising from the absence of any real school of ballet or continuous employment, prevents these young artists from raising themselves above the level of mediocrity.

The Walter E. Owen photograph on the cover shows Moira Shearer, Frederick Ashton, Michael Somes and Margot Fonteyn immediately after their arrival at La Guardia Airport, New York

THE CHARACTER CLASSES OF WALTER CAMRYN

By MARY CLARKE

WE have had a very welcome feast of American dancing this summer, with the New York City Ballet and Ballet Theatre both having seasons at Covent Garden, and we have had many varied examples of the dancers' achievements on stage. It may, therefore, be interesting to tell briefly of some classroom achievements which usually go unrecorded but which play their part in the overall American dance picture.

While I was in the United States last year I was privileged to watch many classes both at the ballet schools and in the modern dance studios of Chicago and New York. All of them were intensely interesting for America has a good quota of great teachers and every dancer will talk endlessly about the genius and the foibles of her own teacher. (My favourite story is the one about the old lady of nearly seventy—Russian, of course—who when exasperated by her students' ineptitude, will jump up and faultlessly

demonstrate the famous *Giselle* diagonal on point in soft shoes!)

But this article cannot possibly cover the whole field and I intend only to describe some character classes I watched Walter Camryn give in Chicago because they seem to me enormously interesting in themselves and important in that Camryn is developing a genuinely American modern form of expression that can be used in conjunction with the classical ballet vocabulary and does not require a different approach and technique as does the American modern dance.

The Chicago classes I saw were given to boys and girls, all ballet trained, of professional or near-professional standard and began with a character barre, which can best be described as a Cecchetti barre done with bent knees, turned-up toes and to syncopated rhythms. After being warmed-up, loosened-up and cheered-up by the variety and vitality of the movements devised for them, the dancers came into the centre of the studio and performed brief *enchaînements* in various moods—ranging from despair to laughter. I had never before realised how differently different people can laugh when ordered to: one boy had everyone in stitches with the infectiousness and apparent spontaneity of his laughter, while anything less amusing than the attempts of some of the novices would be difficult to imagine!

Finally the dancers formed a large circle, with Camryn himself in the middle, and followed him round and round the studio in a mad medley of improvised dance steps and styles. The music echoed everything from Negro rhythms to mountain folk ballads and the dance movement was as varied. Camryn would develop one style for a minute or so, then change swiftly to another, and all the time talking to the dancers, correcting some, encouraging others. It was a terrific *tour de force* on his part and a wonderful work-out for the dancers who developed not only facility in the different dance forms but tremendous alertness in picking up the variations of rhythm and subtle changes in style. I have never seen dancers enjoy a class so much: there was a wonderful atmosphere of enthusiasm and a real synthesis of doin' what comes naturally with formal dance composition.

For Walter Camryn's teaching is based on a deep

WALTER CAMRYN AS DR. ELI DUFFY, WITH PATRICK HEIM

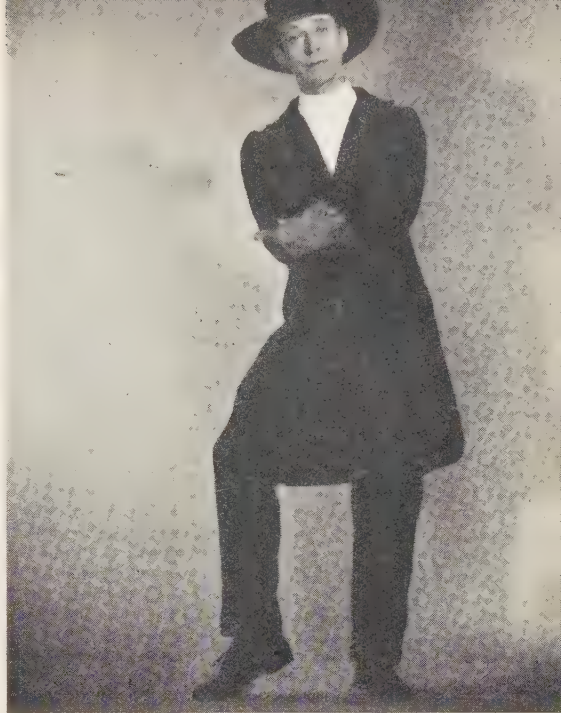


body of character in movement that goes back over many years. He says that the original germ of his character ideas came from Adolph Bolm but he identified only a little with Bolm (considering himself a classical dancer in those days) and it was years later that he really tackled the theory of character dancing all alone. Once he became really interested he found that his sources were everywhere: he watched dancers at folk festivals, at barn dances, in ballrooms, night clubs and studios. It was the untutored ones, rather than the over-trained ones, who had most to teach him. He began to observe and study people in their daily life, on the streets, working, playing games, and at leisure, and saw how age affected or altered movements and how intensely individual were gestures, mannerisms and nervous peculiarities.

When he began to analyse and classify these observations Walter Camryn decided that the most important object should be to discover those qualities that distinguish one person, one class, or one nationality from another. These distinctive movements and gestures—the outward and physical manifestations of character—are the basic material for the character dancer. To study the differences and learn how to give a reasonable impression of them with his own body is the student's chief problem. And yet straight imitation is not enough: the dancer must infuse the movements with individuality through his own person if he is really to give them life.

Camryn is not simply a classroom theorist, however. His ideas are developed right through to performance standard and his own repertoire of concert dances and character numbers is both effective and popular. In working out the movement for a particular character he usually decides on the movement quality first and enhances it later with the necessary miming in order to avoid depending too heavily on mime to get his ideas over. His method of working is probably best described by his own account of how he evolved his dance comedy *Dr. Eli Duffy's "Snakeroot"*.

"From the Yankee pedlar grew a countryside attraction that flourished throughout America—the medicine show. Dr. Eli operated a medicine show and his product was a cure-all for any disease one might think of. Wherever people gathered, in the public square or at the fairs, he set himself up, usually assisted by a small boy, and was really a circus figure. The dances each depict an illness in which Dr. Eli proves the effectiveness of his product by using it. The dances are titled after early American complaints such as *Chills and Fever*, *The Molly Grubs*, *Seven Year Itch*, *The Snakes*, *The Greenapple Quickstep*, *The Vapors*, and *Lost Youth*. In each case I studied how one might feel with a given ailment and what sort of movement would best express it. I then invented movements and steps to get this idea across and then with the



WALTER CAMRYN AS BOSTON JOHN, THE SHAKER

facial expression added to heighten the suffering for comic effects I had all I needed.

"Really to understand an idea one must be constantly redefining it to oneself," says Camryn, and probably it is this continual rediscovery and restatement that holds up his projected book on character dancing. "Every time I start to think about it I realise how much more there is to know about the subject." But he has found out a tremendous lot already and if he will only spare time from his teaching and dancing in order to write it, he has material for a book which would be not only fascinating but invaluable.



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BALBEC AND THE ORIGIN OF THE PAS DE CHAT

by JANET SINCLAIR

AN interesting and hitherto unknown page of ballet history has just come to light in the recent private publication of a series of letters between the Baron de Charlus and his friend Morel, the famous violinist. M. de Charlus was obviously an amateur of ballet and visited not only the Paris Opera but numerous theatres housing small ballet companies in France at the end of the last century. It is curious that the young Marcel of *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* never mentions the theatre at Balbec but maybe he looked on the ballet there as beneath his notice. No doubt Marcel, whom not even his most fervent admirers could defend from charges of a tendency to *snobisme*, attended the brilliant spectacles of ballet in Paris; indeed, his later writings contain references to the Diaghilev Ballet; but of the theatre at Balbec we read nothing. Doubtless Albertine had little time for ballet and that is why Marcel did not attend any of the performances in company with the Verdurins and their "faithful" referred to by Morel in his early letters.

Morel seems to have been fascinated by the ballet and it is in a letter written by him to his future wife, included in the collection referred to above, that we read his explanation—undoubtedly the authentic one of the origin of the *pas de chat*. The Baron's wealth no less than his aristocratic connections quickly won him the right of entrée behind the scenes where he watched with spellbound interest, his only distraction being occasionally to give a playful and friendly pinch to some of the ballet boys backstage, which liberty in nearly every instance they took in the spirit in which it was meant. However, on one occasion he ventured to take such a liberty with a particularly virile young man who was awaiting his entrance immediately behind a wing: and, hey presto! the swift leaping step so well known today was seen for the first time on any stage, and was christened "*pas de chat*" on the spot by the *première danseuse*, fiancée of the young man in question, when he explained the situation afterwards, saying to her as he did so: "J'avais envie de chatter".*

The company at the time boasted no less than two choreographers: the elder, Michel Cendrier (nicknamed Cendrillon or Cinderella by his contemporaries

owing to his permanent delusion that everybody connected with the theatre were intriguing or discriminating against him), who had worked in Italy and brought with him an increased interest in technical matters; the younger, Phillipe du Roix, who had gained his experience in the *corps de ballet* of the Paris Opera and was extremely nationalistic in outlook.

Both these choreographers produced works of importance to the ballet of the period, M. Cendrier's most notable work perhaps being *Choux-Pied, ou Le Faux Contretemps* (*Cabbage-Foot, or The Incorrect Contretemps*); that of M. du Roix bearing the more serious title of *Défense D'Afficher* (*Don't Stick Poor Bill*).

However, a notable weakness to which both were prone, if M. Morel is to be believed (and it is questionable how much a tinge of sour grapes may be taken to colour his attitude to the whole question) was an inability to create leading roles for any *danseuses* in whom they had no personal interest. For instance, the first seven or eight ballets invented by M. Cendrier after his arrival from Italy were created for his first wife, a dancer of technical limitations but infinite charm. Emilie Cendrier was soon the idol of Balbec, poems were written about, and to, her of which unfortunately the only survivor is a somewhat scurrilous rhyme from the pen of the Baron which it is thought unsuitable to quote here. However, we may take it on Morel's evidence that she was noted for her tiny feet, big black eyes and delicate hands.

There was a great deal of dissatisfaction among the other ladies of the ballet and one of them, a black-haired strapping wench of nineteen called Sévérine l'Estrange, decided to do her utmost to cut out Emilie and secure leading roles for herself. An amusing letter from M. de Charlus (No. 23 in the series, page 67) described the subterfuge by which she in fact did so and I regret that pressure of space, if not of censorship, prevents my reprinting it here. However, the deed was accomplished, and Mlle. l'Estrange became the second Mme. Michel Cendrier.

Sévérine had a stronger technique than her predecessor—indeed there were those among the audience, we gather, who unkindly said it was for this that M. Cendrier preferred her to poor Emilie and created his ballets for her, whereas the fact was simply that he fell violently in love with Sévérine: her stage technique had little to do with it, as those in the com-

* Chatter—French argot: Literally "to cat"—"I want to be sick".

way with better execution well knew: but she had an unequalled facility in leaping, being strongly built with lightly bandy legs, and after M. Cendrier's second marriage the leading female roles in his ballets apparently consisted almost exclusively of jumps and beats. At a time this appears to have pleased the public: for example this typical comment of Charlus on her debut as Loona: "Figure-toi," he writes to her in his easy, familiar style, "cette vache a sautée comme un chameau Espagnol!" However, eventually the public became satiated with the same steps monotonously repeated for the ballerina and began to look for some *pirouettes*, attitudes or even a good old-fashioned *arabesque*. Séverine began to sense the public's approbation and shortly afterwards left Cendrier for the First Bassoon. From this moment complete demoralisation overtook Cendrier: he began to pursue all the little girls in the company and only the most resolutely chaste were safe from his libidinous progress, while young girls were hurled into (and out of) his ballets with an utter lack of discrimination

as far as their physical or technical capabilities were concerned, but depending solely on the moment's whim. With the slackening of his obsession with Séverine, however, his technical vocabulary widened once again and he had a series of notable successes, culminating in the aforementioned *Choux-Pied*.

Du Roix, the other choreographer, unfortunately suffered a similar obsession, his wife being greatly gifted on the histrionic side but without great technical facility of any sort. His works were appreciated by the serious public and found great favour with Charlus. "Ce cauchemar affreux," he wrote enthusiastically to the violinist after the première of *Defense d'Afficher*. After his wife left him for the Second Bassoon, Du Roix, in a fit of despondency, quit France for foreign parts. After a total disappearance of three years, ("Il c'est suicidé pour moi, j'en suis sûr," said Mme. du Roix, "le crétin imbécile!"), he reappeared full of exciting reminiscences of his charabanc trip to the source of the Amazon, where he had the privilege of watching various tribal dances,

SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE BALLET IN "TRUMPET CONCERTO". (LEFT) ELAINE FIFIELD AND DAVID POOLE.
(CENTRE) SVETLANA BERIOSOVA AND DAVID BLAIR. (RIGHT) MARYON LANE AND PIRMIN FRECU

photograph by Roger Wood



including the Ritual of the Dancers with Sore Feet who jumped twice as high as any classically trained ballet dancers —“Ces danseurs,” he said to Morel after his return, “figure-toi, les vaches ont sautées comme des chameaux Espagnols!”; his balletisation of this and other cannibal dances into a spectacle entitled *Dans le Bouillon* is the last triumphant success at Balbec recorded in these letters.

Dance Notation

Miss Valerie Preston, who is a member of British Dance Theatre and has studied the Laban Kinetography under Mr. Rudolf Laban himself, intends to hold classes in movement notation at the Company's premises, 10a Newton Road, Westbourne Grove, London, W.2 (Bayswater 6123), whenever she is not on tour. Enquiries should be addressed to the Secretary.

Miss Valerie Preston recently gave the demonstration of “reading” dance *enchainements* at sight when Mr. Albrecht Knust gave his lecture on this system at the School of Russian Ballet.

NATALIE KRASSOVSKA AND JOHN GILPIN IN “LE BEAU DANUBE”, ONE OF THE BALLETS NOW BEING PERFORMED AT THE STOLL THEATRE, LONDON, BY FESTIVAL BALLET

Photograph by Denis de Marney



Result of September Competition

WHEN I set this competition I realised it was not an easy one but I had not anticipated that readers would create their own difficulties. I thought it would be evident to everyone that the American critics would be writing about American dancers and the French critics about French dancers, or at least dancers who had been seen frequently in Paris. However, it was surprising the number of entrants who thought that American critics would write about French dancers they had not even seen and *vice versa*. Two other fairly obvious “leads” were also ignored in several instances with the net result that only two readers achieved as many as seven and six correct results respectively.

It really does not seem possible to give prizes to anyone below that standard and accordingly the two winners are as follows:

Miss Jean Magill,	Miss Jay Norman,
22 Cayton Road,	12 Langbourne Mansions,
Greenford, Middx.	Highgate, London, N.6.

A copy of *Dancers and Critics* (published by A. & C. Black Ltd.) is being sent to each of the above, and in order to increase the value of the book, the English contributors have appended their autographs.

Here is the correct list:

1. Cyril W. Beaumont.....Margot Fonteyn
2. Caryl BrahmsJean Babilée
3. Anatole ChujoyMaria Tallchief
4. A. V. Cotton.....Beryl Grey
5. A. H. Franks.....Alicia Markova
6. Arnold Haskell.....Irène Skorik
7. Joan Lawson.....Alexandra Danilova
8. Irène Lidova.....Yvette Chauviré
9. P. W. Manchester.....George Skibine
10. Pierre Michaut.....Nina Vyrubova
11. Walter TerryNora Kaye
12. Léandre Vaillat.....Tamara Toumanova
13. Audrey WilliamsonRobert Helpmann

I am shortly contemplating another competition which I hope you will all find a little easier.

Mona Inglesby

Miss Mona Inglesby, director and prima ballerina of International Ballet, has made an excellent recovery from the recent operation to her foot and will be dancing again within a few weeks. Miss Inglesby has had so much illness in the past two years that everyone will be hoping that she has seen the last of her health troubles for a very long time to come.

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Balletomane's Bookshelf

CHEVALIER NOVERRE: FATHER OF MODERN BALLET. By Derek Lynham (Sylvan Press, 1950; 21/-).

IN SPITE Mr. Lynham's declared aim to have correlated "the known information on the Chevalier Noverre so as to present a picture of the man and his work and to assess, from the study of his works, the extent of his contribution to the art of ballet", this pleasantly written, well-documented but somewhat pedestrian biography adds surprisingly little to our knowledge of either the personality or the creator. The outlines of the portrait are, so to speak, sharpened; but its features, its contours of expression, are, alas, still matters for conjecture.

Mr. Lynham has been content to augment existing information rather than extend its boundaries. Our curiosity is thus well satisfied in regard to such matters as the delightful contents of the letters exchanged by Noverre and Garrick on the subject of the choreographer's unhappy visit to this country; the motives of the Noverre ballets; and the pathetic struggles of the slowly dying man to exact payment for his services from an indifferent Government. But these accidents are surely no more than the effects, the accidents arising from an active creative life. More important is the spiritual background to Noverre's achievement. What, we may ask, were his reactions to the changing intellectual climate of his age? Did he observe the first signs of Romanticism springing from the decaying structure of 18th century society? Was he even aware that the structure was decaying? These, and so many other questions, Mr. Lynham leaves unresolved. The author's other task, the assessment of Noverre's

actual contribution to the art of ballet, is, of course, impossible to achieve. The ballets themselves have vanished completely; and to judge them, as Mr. Lynham attempts, from contemporary criticism and Noverre's own accounts in the *Letters* is as injudicial as it would be to contrive an estimate of Wagner's music drama given only the libretti, the composer's critical work and the comments of an outraged press.

The very title of Mr. Lynham's book suggests that he tends to over-estimate Noverre's importance as a ballet maker, a common though understandable failing when one is dealing with a legendary figure who is also a brilliant theorist. May not the truth be, however, as Svetloff contends, that Noverre's theories of the 'new ballet', and his reforms, although very bold for the age, did not always keep pace with his famous *Letters*?

The 'new ballet' was in fact not new at all. Noverre was a reformer rather than an innovator. And, so far as one can judge, the themes and choreographic nature of his ballets differed little in their essentials from those of his immediate predecessors. Even when the abuses of the day had been removed; when the mirror had been so carefully held up to nature; the result more closely resembled the court ballet of Louis XV than the *Giselle* of Coralli or the *Firebird* of Fokine. The formal *ballet d'action* as conceived by Noverre died before even its master. It is the ballet of the second part of the nineteenth century that, for better or for worse, still dominates the ballet of our time.

To anyone who *thinks* about ballet this book is an essential companion to the Noverre *Letters*. Any lack of originality in its biographical approach is amply compensated for by the authenticity of its data and the painstaking erudition of its author. ALAN STOREY.

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